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George Kalamaras

THE PREPARATION OF BONE GLUE

I am walking the night streets of Paris, completely naked except for a pair of gray ragg wool socks and two giant moth wings growing out of my back. They are the black velvet green of a 1920's opium couch and open and close when moonlight surfaces and submerges back into a bank of clouds. Black antennae bend like dark wands in wind. There is not a star in the sky, only Venus, and I have the desire to look over my left shoulder and say the name of my mother three times softly, like throwing salt on a path of fallen red maple leaves. *Georgina*, I say. *Geor-gina*, I repeat more slowly, tonguing the night air with the exaggerated thrashing of a gold carp at the edge of a temple pool. *Georgina*, I clench once more with the strain in my turned neck and rush of blood from the bend. From behind me, a man with a leg cramp walks past, scuffling the ground with his left foot as if tapping for water. He doesn't notice me but several yards ahead suddenly turns and calls me by name. *George Kalamaras. You're that vegetarian from Indiana.* I'm startled. *How do you know?* I ask. *It's the moth wings*, he says. *You've taken such good care of my moth wings.*

He looks like somebody's bald uncle, ready to play roulette on a Friday night in 1920's Paris. He has the crush of a rain-moistened cigar. He resembles a peregrine falcon, his nose hooking into river fog wafting up from the street. *But I don't know you*, I think to myself, afraid to hurt his feelings. Who is this man with the limp of a bird dragging a broken wing? *Yes you do*, he suddenly hears my thoughts. He peels off his falcon head and is a lion, mane matted with Kalahari sand. He peels off his lion head and is a Victorian woman, face controlled and withdrawn and gorgeous like marble above her tucks. He cracks the marble and is an owl, then a falcon again. *I'm Max Ernst*, he says. *You just don't remember because you haven't yet been born.*

I run to embrace him. It is so good to see Max Ernst again. My eyes well with river mist but suddenly begin to burn as tiny street pebbles and flecks of sand ease out of my tear ducts. He hugs me, gently tapping my moth wings, stroking them like two lost and returning dogs. *There, there*, he says. *Green*, he says. *Solidified light from fading gas*

lamps, he says. The twin swans of Breton, he says. A pair of beautiful opiated broccoli heads, he says. Mirrored spots on a tissue of Rene Daumal's tuberculous phlegm, he says. I want to take them off, give him something real, something solid, tell him it's o.k. That they were never really lost. That like anything truly loved, they're his, even if for a while they weren't. That like gray-green morning glories they just close sometimes when the moon goes cold behind cigar-fate clouds. That like jaundiced skin, they sometimes shrivel to protect faint inner layers of epidermal light, the velvet flight of birds at dawn leaving a field as sudden shotgun fire, sparrows returning all at once to a telegraph pole at dusk. We must prepare the glue, he says. Wrap the tubes from your bones to narrow your blood, he says. Sap the marrow into a laboratory glass through a rubber hose, he says. Place the coils directly on your skin, he says. The hot metal plate over your groin, he says. Lie you on the couch and coax starlight into your ears so you can hear the deaf man's symphony, he says. Stroke those wands and brush your wings to stimulate the juices and the pulp, he says.

We walk hand in hand looking for a place to lie down to hook up the hoses and tubes and plates and to prepare the bone glue. I am still naked, and a drop of sperm oozes out of the tip of my penis, onto my left sock. It is warm and sticky, a drop that becomes a tiny puddle, then a small milky pool on the top of my foot. I think of Rene Daumal coughing phlegm in lotus posture in India in dusk. It stays there on my sock, collecting dust, insects, a bumblebee, a torn pink tissue. It is so wonderful to see Max Ernst again, after all this time, and after never having yet met. I inquire about my mother. *Is she a lion?* I ask. *An owl? A peregrine falcon?* And he tells me she will be a cloud, then a shadow cutting water out of a red cobblestone pebble in Zurich, then a grain of sand from the Kalahari, then a red ant in the Gobi, then a morning glory seed so blue it will have to be born in Chicago, where I will follow, screaming for breath on the south side at precisely 6:18 p.m. on a Monday on a December 3rd not too far from now. *The night air will be cold,* he says. *But you will be warm,* he says. *Inside where the omphalos blood will bathe your wings,* he says. *And your wands,* he says. *Which will be my wings and wands,* he says. *Which will open and close, close and open as your mother breathes you into each turn,* he says. *Which will then massage her vagina when you are born,* he says. *And ease her pain,* he says.

I am so happy, holding Max Ernst's hand, moved to tears, because I love my mother. Love the memory of the scent of her red maple leaf thighs. Love the taste of salt when I turn in any grocers to touch a tomato and recall the steam of her spaghetti sauce bathing my face when I would hunch into her pan. Love these wings now that I understand the shyness beneath gas lamps of the color green, the first light at dawn easing out of the throat of a freshly dead sparrow, of a fallen spear of asparagus before the coming of the killing frost. Love the gold gasp of a carp as it thrashes against a green marble floor, veins of stone familiarly cool like fresh fish blood but air oddly oxidized like sipping through gills a lock of burning hair. I am so happy, walking down the street with Max Ernst, hand in hand, because I love my mother. And because I love Max Ernst.

(after Edward Hirsch)